

Safety Assessment Program (SAP) Frequently Asked Questions

What is the goal of SAP?

The goal of SAP is to help local government perform accurate facility safety assessments as quickly as possible. This will allow people to use safe homes and businesses, and ensure that people are prohibited from entering unsafe structures after a disaster. SAP Evaluators survey damaged facilities to determine if there are safety hazards to building occupants or to the general public. SAP Evaluators also provide recommended posting of placards that denote the condition of each structure evaluated.

In planning for disaster recovery, what steps should a local building department take to assist with legal issues?

Whether or not SAP Evaluators are requested, it is important for a local government to be legally prepared for any type of disaster. Examples of ordinances that can assist the local government with its post-disaster activities include:

1. Reduction of disaster hazard by codes and by mitigation, such as seismic retrofit or elevation of structures above flood levels;
2. A system for posting placards identifying the condition of buildings, structures, and infrastructure;
3. Nuisance abatement, which permits the jurisdiction to demolish a structurally damaged building; and
4. Disaster repair and reconstruction.

Building departments should also consult with legal counsel to determine what powers and responsibilities building inspectors, SAP Evaluators, and other local officials will require in order to enter, evaluate and post damaged structures.

In order to be eligible for federal and/or state disaster assistance funding, local government should also adopt repair/restoration standards in accordance with Title 44, Section 206.226, Code of Federal Regulations. These repair standards should provide “objective,” rather than “subjective” triggers to determine the level of repair required. In general terms, all standards must:

1. apply to the type of repair or restoration required (standards may be different for new construction and repair);
2. be appropriate to the pre-disaster use of the facility;
3. be in writing and formally adopted prior to the date of a disaster or be a federal or state requirement applicable to the type of restoration;
4. apply uniformly to all similar types of facilities within the jurisdiction;
5. be in effect and enforceable when the disaster occurs.

Which state agencies have safety assessment responsibilities?

State agencies that are responsible for the design, construction, and post-disaster safety assessment of these facilities and infrastructure:

- Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development:
 - hospitals
 - skilled nursing facilities
 - intermediate care facilities
- Division of the State Architect:
 - public schools
 - state-owned essential services facilities
 - state-leased essential services facilities
- State Fire Marshal's Office:
 - state-owned facilities (fire code)
 - non-structural systems and components
- Department of Transportation:
 - state-maintained highways, bridges, overpasses and underpasses
- Department of Water Resources:
 - state water projects
 - state-inspected dams
 - privately-owned jurisdictional dams
- Department of Housing and Community Development:
 - state-controlled mobile home parks

What resources are available from the California Emergency Management Agency (Cal EMA)?

When disaster strikes a community, numerous facility and infrastructure inspections may be necessary. Through SAP, Cal EMA makes available volunteer and public resources, including engineers, architects, and building inspectors to perform required safety assessments. The SAP is activated at the request of local government through the Incident Command System (ICS)-based Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS).

If the Governor proclaims a state of emergency, labor costs may be eligible for reimbursement under the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA). The requesting local government is responsible, however, for the 25 percent local share that is required under CDAA.

Similarly, labor cost reimbursement may be eligible if the President declares a major disaster or an emergency. Under the federal Public Assistance Program, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) may reimburse 75 percent of the eligible costs, with the remaining 25 percent being shared between the state and requesting local government.

What skills are available from individuals within SAP?

SAP participants provide a wide variety of individual skills and experience. These skills range from rapid assessment to detailed evaluation of buildings, structures, and infrastructure. All SAP participants are trained to perform their specific responsibilities through a standardized training program. The assessment procedures and criteria described in the Applied Technology Council (ATC) publications Procedures for Postearthquake Safety Evaluation of Buildings (ATC-20), Field Manual: Postearthquake Safety Evaluation of Buildings (ATC-20-1), Field Manual: Safety Evaluation of Buildings after Windstorms and Floods (ATC-45), and other publications in this series provide the basis for the standardized training program.

How does local government determine the number of assessments required after a disaster?

Based on available data from the Northridge Earthquake, the total of obviously damaged buildings (obtained by windshield surveys) represent approximately 30 percent of the actual number of building assessments that would be required.

Calculation: (obviously damaged building total) divided by 0.3 = total number of assessments required.

How does local government determine the number of SAP Evaluators needed to complete the required assessments, duration of SAP Evaluator activation, and if any specialized SAP Evaluators are required?

Based on available data from the Northridge Earthquake, each SAP Evaluator team is able to complete approximately 13 inspections per day.

Calculation: total assessments required / 13 = total number of SAP Evaluators* needed to complete the total assessments in one day.

* If this total number of SAP Evaluators is large, the local government may consider utilizing a smaller number of SAP Evaluators for a longer period of time. The requesting jurisdiction needs to estimate a reasonable number of days to complete the required assessments. SAP Evaluators are generally deployed for a period of five days. This factor should also be incorporated into these calculations.

Additionally, the requesting jurisdiction may require SAP Evaluators who can perform specific types of assessments (i.e., architect, structural engineer, building inspector, etc.).

Will SAP Evaluators provide dollar estimates of damage to buildings, structures, and infrastructure?

SAP Evaluators will not provide dollar amount estimates of the damage.

How does local government determine cost estimates?

The revised evaluation forms include percentage-of-loss information that allows local governments to calculate damage estimates. Local governments are encouraged to develop representative cost figures for the different types of construction within their jurisdiction.

Having a system of cost estimation developed prior to the disaster will make the dollar damage estimates more easily obtainable.

Local tax information or permit fee tables may allow the local government to rapidly calculate an approximate dollar amount of damage for each building or structure.

What assessments do SAP Evaluators perform?

Assessments are generally performed by teams of two or more SAP Evaluators, dependent on the type and difficulty of the assessment. There are two types of assessments performed:

- ✓ **Rapid Evaluation:** (typically a team of two building inspectors or a building inspector and an engineer or architect)
 - initial assessment
 - minimizes labor required
 - may include construction inspection, plan check, evaluation of dangerous conditions, etc.
 - post apparently safe, restricted use, or obviously unsafe buildings
- ✓ **Detailed Evaluation:** (typically a team includes a building inspector, a structural engineer, an architect, and other specialists as needed to address the specific situation)
 - completed after the Rapid Evaluations, when requested
 - comprehensive inspection of the entire building particularly its structural system and surrounding area
 - recommends a 'posting' classification to provide reasonable assurance that the structural system is sufficiently safe
 - is always done on potentially damaged civil infrastructure

When are Engineering Evaluations needed?

Engineering Evaluations are performed on all buildings, structures and infrastructure when full-time occupancy is not permitted and a more detailed assessment is required to determine facility safety. Engineering Evaluations may also be required for buildings that the local government is considering for demolition. Engineering Evaluations must be performed by professionally registered engineers or licensed architects who are retained by the owner.

What are the procedures for posting and what do the tag colors represent?

A three-tier posting classification system is recommended by Cal EMA and is described in the publication series Procedures for Postearthquake Safety Evaluation of Buildings (ATC-20). CA OES suggests using the modified forms and placards as described in the SAP Evaluator training manual and the Addendum to ATC-20 (ATC-20-2).

The colored placards (tags) are tools posted on inspected structures to easily identify facility damage assessment results from a distance. They are normally posted at all building entrances. The following describes the circumstances by which inspectors should post each type of placard.

- ❑ **INSPECTED:** (Green Tags) Buildings can be damaged, yet remain safe. If the safety of a building was not significantly changed by the disaster, it should be posted with a green placard reading INSPECTED.
- ❑ **UNSAFE:** (Red Tags) Buildings damaged by a disaster that pose an imminent threat to life or safety under expected loads or other unsafe conditions should be posted with a red placard reading UNSAFE. These are not demolition orders.
- ❑ **RESTRICTED USE:** (Yellow Tags) When there is some risk from damage in all or part of the building that does not warrant red-tagging, a yellow tag should be used. The placard should indicate the specific restriction (i.e., entry, duration of occupancy, use, etc.). When the extent of damage is uncertain or cannot be ascertained within the time and resources available to a Rapid Evaluation team, the building should be posted with a yellow placard reading RESTRICTED USE indicating additional inspection requirements, and any restrictions on use or occupancy should be clearly noted on the placard.

Although a building may be placarded RESTRICTED USE, specific areas in and around the building could be further identified as unsafe. This specific area should be cordoned off and posted with a red placard reading AREA UNSAFE. An AREA UNSAFE placard helps identify dangerous situations that may exist around or within an otherwise structurally sound building. A building posted RESTRICTED USE may have a specific area that is posted AREA UNSAFE. In this situation, the RESTRICTED USE placard should indicate the specifics of the restrictions and identify the location of the AREA UNSAFE.

The actual posting of a structure is accomplished by mounting the appropriate placard in a clearly visible place near all usual points of entry to the building.

Placards must not be removed or replaced, except by authorized representatives of the building department.

What are the procedures for barricading structures?

Barricades or yellow incident tape must be used for designating an area as unsafe. Local authorities should be notified.

What are official placards and who can post them?

The ATC-20 placards, or similar placards developed by the local jurisdiction, can be used as official placards once they have been formally adopted by the jurisdiction. These official placards are printed with the local government's name and seal. The information contained on official placards is enforceable. If SAP Evaluators are deputized, they can post official placards. Only representatives of the local government can post official placards. Inspectors not deputized by the local jurisdiction can only complete generic placards that simply recommend building status.

If the local jurisdiction decides not to deputize the SAP Evaluators, the local government must send their building inspectors out to replace the generic placards with official placards.

Why are changes in posting classifications made?

Changes in posting classifications occur as a result of several situations including:

- reclassification of a structure originally posted as RESTRICTED USE that was the subject of a detailed evaluation
- reinspection due to new or subsequent damage (e.g., earthquake aftershock)
- reinspection after mitigating measures or temporary repairs have been made.

How are changes in posting classification made?

When re-inspection occurs, a new placard should be posted that indicates the date and time of the re-inspection, even if the classification is unchanged.

Changes in posting classification should only be done by an authorized representative of the local jurisdiction, including SAP Evaluators who are deputized as Deputy Building Inspectors.

Engineers performing an Engineering Evaluation should prepare a letter to the local building department outlining their findings and recommendations. The building department will review this letter and determine if a change in posting is appropriate. If so, they will send an authorized representative to the site to post the change.

Should the requesting jurisdiction deputize responding SAP Evaluators?

Cal EMA encourages deputizing the SAP Evaluators in accordance with the requirements of local ordinances. Only authorized representatives of the local government can post official placards. If the responding SAP Evaluators are deputized, they become authorized representatives of the local government and can post official placards.

If the SAP Evaluators are not deputized, they can only complete generic placards that simply reflect the recommendations of building status. Consequently, the local government must assign an authorized representative to each evaluation team to allow the team to post official placards.

Will SAP Evaluators make recommendations for demolition or repair?

SAP Evaluators will not make recommendations relating to demolition or repair of any building, facility or infrastructure. However, if the SAP Evaluator has been deputized as a Deputy Building Inspector, the local government could request that a recommendation be made for temporary shoring of a structure or building. Demolition or repair recommendations can only be made after an Engineering Evaluation has been performed by the facility owner.

If the SAP Evaluators are deputized by the jurisdiction, does the jurisdiction assume financial responsibility for providing workers' compensation?

In accordance with the California Emergency Services Act, Article 17, Section 8657(b), the requesting local government does not assume financial responsibility for workers' compensation if they elect to deputize responding SAP Evaluators who are registered with the state as Disaster Service Workers-Volunteers (DSW-Volunteers). The state assumes financial responsibility for providing workers' compensation protection for DSW-Volunteers.

If the responding SAP Evaluators are local or state government employees, they are registered as Disaster Service Workers, and as such, are provided limited liability protection and workers' compensation. Therefore, the state provides this protection for state employees; SAP Evaluators who are local government employees are provided this limited liability protection through their home jurisdiction.

What are the costs to local government for using SAP Evaluators?

In all cases, local government is responsible to reimburse SAP Evaluators deployed at their request. Reimbursement costs are limited to housing, meals, travel, and may include other necessary expenses directly related to safety assessment activities. Responding SAP Evaluators shall save all expense receipts.

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Can SAP Evaluators enter private property?

During emergencies, access to damaged structures is subject to the laws and regulations enacted by the local jurisdiction. A proclaimed local emergency allows local government to take preventative measures necessary to protect and preserve public health and safety. Such measures may include the right of access to damaged structures on private property.

When a disaster occurs, police and fire officials may restrict entry to damaged structures. Proper identification and pre-emergency coordination among local agencies will ensure adequate access to damaged structures for safety assessments.

What actions are required when the SAP Evaluators arrive?

The responding SAP Evaluators will assemble at the designated staging area. The local government SAP Coordinator will facilitate the deployment of the responding SAP Evaluators by:

- maintaining a roster
- providing a situation briefing including:
 - ✓ a map of the jurisdiction
 - ✓ local identification, field passes, parking ID and permits, if necessary
 - ✓ a list of telephone numbers and locations of available emergency services (i.e., emergency shelters, police and fire, hazmat, animal control, etc.)
 - ✓ federal teleregistration numbers, if available
 - ✓ evaluation forms
 - ✓ official placards (if deputized)
 - ✓ ATC-20 generic placards (if not deputized)

- ✓ yellow incident tape
- ✓ staple gun/thumbtacks/tape for placards
- ✓ communications equipment
- ✓ transportation to/from damaged areas if the SAP Evaluators have not driven into the area
- ✓ paper, pens, and staples
- ✓ instructions regarding media inquiries
- ✓ jurisdictional policies regarding questions from property owners, etc.
- ensuring that refresher training is provided
- providing assessment assignments, including local maps and building information
- coordinating the deputizing of responding SAP Evaluators.

How should local government manage the arrival of non-requested volunteers?

Local government should have procedures in place to appropriately utilize non-requested volunteers. These individuals can supplement local government, allowing employees to perform emergency-related duties. Non-requested volunteers may perform building assessments but are not recognized as SAP Evaluators and will not have the worker's compensation and liability protections of the Safety Assessment Program.

How should SAP Evaluators respond to questions from residents of damaged properties?

SAP Evaluators should conduct themselves in an empathetic and professional manner whenever they encounter local residents impacted by the event. SAP Evaluators should be prepared to direct people to available assistance (e.g., food, shelter, medical, crisis counseling).

All requests from local residents, building owners, etc. for copies of assessment reports should be referred to the local building department.

How is the building evaluation data provided to the local jurisdiction?

SAP Evaluators will complete an approved evaluation form for each building inspected. This form documents building conditions and the type of placard posted.

Local jurisdictions are encouraged to conduct debriefing sessions for all SAP Evaluators. During these sessions, the SAP Evaluators will provide the forms and any supplemental information, including sketches, photographs, etc. Completed evaluation forms are to be provided to the local government's SAP Coordinator.

What administrative support is required to process evaluation reports?

The SAP Coordinator will ensure all inspection documentation is processed and maintained according to local established procedures. Cal EMA recommends the information be electronically entered in a database. The SAP Coordinator, through the SEMS Operational Area, regularly provides the inspection data to Cal EMA. (The SAP Coordinator Training provides further guidance on this subject.)

Where can local government find the standard evaluation form?

The ATC-20 standard evaluation forms are provided in the following documents:

- SAP information page on Cal EMA web site, located at <http://www.calema.ca.gov> (under “Recovery,” “Safety Assessment Program”)
- SAP Evaluator and SAP Coordinator Training Manuals.

How can local government expedite reconstruction after an emergency?

The local jurisdiction should prepare policies and procedures for reconstruction and formally adopt repair standards prior to an emergency. This advance planning can streamline activities such as plan review and permit issuance, including conditional use permits and zoning variances, etc.

How can local government prepare for disagreements with posted damage classifications?

The local emergency operations plan should include a formal appeals procedure for owners that disagree with the damage classification of their building. As a part of this procedure, owners of damaged property should be encouraged to retain their own structural engineers to advise them and the local government as to why the original damage classification should be changed. Engineering Evaluations must be arranged between the building owner and a professionally registered engineer. The owner pays the cost of these evaluations. Engineering Evaluations may be particularly important to owners of buildings that are so heavily damaged that demolition is considered.

How should SAP Evaluators handle inquiries from the media?

SAP Evaluators should refer all media inquiries to the local government SAP Coordinator or Public Information Officer. The local government SAP Coordinator should inform SAP Evaluators of procedures for media inquiries at the initial briefing.